

VZCZCXYZ9516
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #0624 0651536
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051536Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7020
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 000624

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2018
TAGS: PGOV PREL AF RS
SUBJECT: MFA REASSERTS SUPPORT FOR NATO MISSION IN
AFGHANISTAN

REF: MOSCOW 520

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) In a March 5 conversation, Deputy Director of the MFA Second Asia Department Ali Mustafabeily dismissed as "ludicrous" possible statements made by Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Kabulov, who reportedly told the press he suspected that U.S. military aircraft were used to ship narcotics out of Afghanistan. Mustafabeily assured us that such comments, which he undertook to verify, "in no way" reflected the GOR position. He underscored that the U.S., Russia, NATO and the CSTO share common interests in fighting terrorism and narcotics trafficking, and ensuring political stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

¶2. (C) We also raised the recent press statements by CSTO Secretary General Bordyusha, who reportedly charged that the

SIPDIS

U.S. had failed to address the narcotics problem in Afghanistan and was instead working to set up rival security structures in the region and "drive a geopolitical wedge between Central Asian countries and Russia to reorient the region towards the U.S." We pointed out that NATO remains unsure of the goals of the CSTO and that statements of this nature complicate possible cooperation (reftel). Mustafabeily asserted that the CSTO did not have to "prove" its legitimacy, underscoring that if the U.S. and NATO insisted on the NATO-Russia Council being the only mechanism for cooperation on Afghanistan "that is your loss."

¶3. (C) On Russia's bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan, Mustafabeily told us that no progress had been made on the Russian offer of military assistance to Afghanistan. The GOA is yet to respond to the Russian request for a list of weapons needed by the Afghan Army or to the invitation for the Afghan Defense Minister to visit Moscow. Mustafabeily acknowledged the possibility that the Karzai Government might not be interested in Russian assistance, but suggested that the U.S. could be pressuring the Afghans not to accept Russia's offer.

BURNS